VNITIE, TRVTH and REASON.

Presented in all Humility Petition-wise to the Honourable, the Knights, Citizens and Burgesses, for the Common-House of PARLIAMENT.

By some moderate, and Peace-desiring Ministers, for the more happy and certaine reconciling of the Church-differences.

OT

Printed Anno Dom. 1641.

TO THE READER.

IT was not at first intended, that this following Discourse presented Petition-wise should flye so publickely but such modestie and truth withall are both so evenly expressed, that the eyes of envie, malice, and uncharitablenesse (which usually are most quicke upon actions of this nature) cannot take iust advantage, as farre as wee can apprehend. Wee therefore on the behalfe of our selves and others, doe humbly crave, that what is here presented with a dexterous intention, may not have a sinister acception.

TO

TO THE HONOVRABLE THE Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses, for the Commons House of Parliament.

Humbly representeth

THAT Episcopasie is a frame anciently raised out of the Pastorall place, built up with Chancellours, Deanes, Arch-Deakons, Commissaries, Surrogates, Officials, Apparitors, &c. And further finished with their Consistories, High-Commission, Oath *Ex Officio*, Bookes of Canons, old and new, Bookes of Recreation and Libertie, Ceremonies, and manifold Innovations enlarged, especialy in latter times by violent intemperate Spirits, which have pursued many of the best lived of the Ministry and people, with too much heat, insomuch, that many choyce men have been wormed out; the most scandalous cherished, Doctrine adulterated, the fire of zeale quenched: Tyranny exercised, especially over the consciences of their poore Brethren; Primitive Discipline defaced, the iudgement of many ingaged for Episcapacy *Iure divino*; Civill Wars incouraged, (the most dangerous and hazardous undertaking of a State.) In the mean time, the Prelates notsufficiently sensible of the dishonour of our gracious Soveraigne, and securitie of these happy and illustrious Kingdomes. Nay, besides all this, many of the late Church-Governours have also complyed

too much with the Popish Faction, and drawne (*quantum in illis*) the *odium* of the late disturbances upon his Majestie (let them pretend what they please) and dishonour upon the Protestant Religion, in the eyes of the Romish party, and the whole world by their tongues, pens and indevors.

May it please therefore this Honourable House to take Episcopall Government into your grave and serious Consideration. And if it may stand with the ways and customs of this Honourable house, that our Petition may be presented to the House of the Lords, & to his excellent Majestie.

1 First, that a speedy survey may bee taken of this old ruinous and decayed building by a Commission *ad inquirendum*, concerning the truth of the numerous complaints from all parts of this Kingdome. When *God* visited *Sodom* in Iudgement, hee first sent his Angels to inquire of the truth of the crimes thereof.

2 If upon iust and exact triall the whole building from the foundation to the highest part of the superstructure, prove sound, *God* forbid, any moderate spirit should desire the alteration of a Government so long established: but if (*in toto compositio*) there bee an universall dissolution and weakenesse of all parts, that then the old decayed frame may be taken downe; and such a new modell propouuded, as may most nearly agree with the Word, the Apostles, and Primitive times: with the assistance of a select Company of grave, pious, learned and Orthodox Divines, in nature of a nationall Synod, which may be chosen by your singular care and wisdome, gathered out of all parts of the Kingdome, and authorised for that purpose. And in case it may stand with the pleasure of his Majestie, and this High and Honourable Court of Parliament, that some Scots and Irish Divines may bee also admitted to such Assembly, which may happily tend, not only to mutuall information of themselves, but to a more firme obligation of all members in these Churches in Civill or Ecclesiasticall affaires

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under our gracious Soveraigne as Supreme Governour unto a more firme vnion and obedience.

Notwithstanding all this, it is not the desire of your Petitioners, with the Sons of *Zebedee*, that fire should come downe from heaven and distroy this frame of Government; neither any illegall or precipitant violence, should demolish it; such reverence doe we owe to the memory of those industrious, pious-learned Bishops, which have sometimes sealed the testimony of the Gospell with their blood. And to our happy Princes (whose Names are ever blessed with us) who have yeelded all Princely indulgence unto Episcapall dignities. Only thus far do your Petitioners humbly sue, forasmuch as there is such a considerable number of grievances and complainnats, through the whole Kingdome, (as may appeare by the numerours Petitions and Remonstrances to this Honourable House,) That in the meane time whilst a Commission issues out for a more full discovery of Corruptions in Ecclesiasticall Government & Ministers, notoriously scandalus, the above named Ecclesiasticall Assembly bee called, and Episcopall Governours allow'd a faire & legall triall by Ministers, men of their owne Order (as Lords are tried by their Peeres) but impartiall, & not ingaged by the dignities & preferments of the tims.

And if it may not savour of saucinesse, or too high presumption, May it please this Honourable House, to require the Episcopall party, to assigne some of their owne choice to answer in such a well constituted Assembly, and to give liberty to the Presbiteriall Disciplinaries, as in *Scotland*, or them of the Pastorall and more Independent way, as in new *England*, to come in and oppose, only give leave, we beseech you, that the Word may be the moderator in this Nationall Synod. And if we may not be thought to presume upon this intelligent and religious House, wee humbly sue, First, that in such a well dispos'd Assembly, the Doctrine of the Church may be cleared and explained.

Secondly, the Discipline questioned. First by what te-

nure Episcopacy holds, whether *Iure Divino, vel Eccl siastico?* If *Divino*, it must necessarily stand for ever. Secondly, if *Ecclesiastico* whether it be not alterable according to corruptions attending it, or the varing constitutions of particular Churches, or the like considerable Circumstances?

3. If alterable, whether this Government may safely be altered in this Church of *England*?

4. If it may be altered, what Government can bee propounded more neerely agreeing to the Word, and more fit for these times?

5. Whether *Christ* left any certaine and necessary Discipline to be observed in his Church forever?

6. Whether Examples, which have not grounds on expresse Rules, or necessary Consequences out of those commands doe bind the Conscience to subjection, as to an ordinance of *Christs*.

Whether it be not fit for Christians rather to follow the Examples of *Christ*, his Apostles, or the purer times for Presidents, then the more degenerate and corrupt times of the world?

When these or the like Questions are well discussed and decided, The confirmation of such Acts of Assembly as shal be then determined, we submit to the wisdome of this Honourable House.

In the meane time most noble Patriots, suffer not the glory of our Church to set under a Cloude. We have betrusted you with our selves, and all ours, faile us not in the maine, (*viz.*) in the matters of Religion, neither Doctrine nor discipline.

Begin we beseech you where your forefathers left, in the dayes of King *Edward* the 6. Let the noble blood of your Ancestors which runs in your veyns induce you to perfect the glorious beginnings of your renowned Predecessors. Never thinke the Common-wealth can be well healed, unlesse the Church be also cured. Did not our sufferings in

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the Church lead the way to yours in the Civill State? If you conceive your worke is fully ended, when the Common-wealths grievances are removed: *God* himselfe will not take it well at your hands to leave *Sion* weeping, and none comforting her. You have come on nobly and like Religious Patriots, in giving faire hopes of easing the distressed part of the Church: Go on like your selves, and the *God* of Heaven prosper you. Let not golden Balls turne you out of the way: Neither *Syrenian* musicke, nor *Crocodile* teares of the degenerate part of the Tribe of *Levi* captivat your judgments. You have the whole Nation ingaged to be Servants unto the King for ever in a stricter bond, if you his great Counsell of State, according to his trust in you, see Religion freed from the complaints and grievances of it. It is true, Episcopall governours, with their neerest friends, thinke it scorne to come to tryall of their title. We are not ignorant of their choycest Arguments: but if you please with patience to survey them, you shall find they have studied fallacies more then demonstrations. It is true, they pretend 1. the Word: 2. Antiquity: 3. Reference to our Laws. 4. Order. 5. Suppression of Errors, Schismes and Heresies. 6. Incouragement to Learning. 7. Conformity of Episcopall Government unto Monarchy. All specious pretences, we confesse, like the Grapes and fruites of *Sodom*: but if you touch them they fall to Ashes.

First, the Word, no better plea in the world, nor stronger Argument, if the pontificiall side would shew but one expresse Command or necessary inference for Episcopacy over the Clergy (it is our meaning) to bee a constant and standing office in the Church: we should thinke our selves deserved to lose our Eares, liberty, life and all, for speaking against a Law of *Gods* owne making. But whilst the great Clerks of the Kingdome in this *multa dicunt, nihil probant*. We must desire this Government (but in an Ecclesiasticall assembly) may goe to the question.

Secondly, *Antiquity*, a plea which would well have ſerved in the dayes of *Hezekiah* and *Ioſiah* for keeping up the High Places, becauſe they had continued from the dayes of *Solomon* or afore. If this Argument were ſufficient, the Reformers in the dayes of *Edward* the 6. and Queene *Elizabeth* of famous memory ſhould have ſtayd their hands from taking away ſuch ancient Ceremonies as had continued many hundred of yeares.

Upon this grond an old ruinous houſe which is rotten from the foundation, to the higheſt part of the ſuperſtructure ſhould not be pulled downe; upon this ground old Vines, where the *humidum radicale* is quite gone, and fruite ceaſes, ſhould not be plucked up, nor others planted in their roome.

The brazen Serpent was at firſt erected upon better warrant then ever Epiſcopacie, yet when it grew worm-eaten with corruption of Antiquity, *Hezekiah* made bold to take it downe, and the fact is fronted with the name of Zeale unto Immortality.

Thirdly, *Reference to our Laws*, It is true, Epiſcopacy is too truely and too much interwoven with the Statutes of this Kingdome; not that Epiſcopacy ſtrengthens the Laws, but the Lawes Epiſcopacie. So that it ſeemes no neceſſary Argument for this dignity ſtanding *Statu quo nunc*, but rather ſerves for a good caution, that in taking downe of this old frame, the Statutes of the Land ſuffer no violence, which we doubt not but by the wiſedome of this Honourable Houſe, may be well contrived.

Fourthly, *Order*, a great deale of reaſon for it, if *Order* do not violate that eternall and indiſpenſible Rule of *Charity*, unto which the Epiſcopall Government hath done much violence, by their pride and Tyranny over the Conſciences of their Brethren. In ſuch caſe we deſire the Word, Chriſtian Liberty and Charity may be preferred afore any pretended Order in the World.

Fiftly,

Fifthly, Suppreſſing of Schiſmes, Errors, and Hereſies; we deny not but when Epiſcopacie was firſt raiſed and inſtituted in the Church, there was ſuch a politick intention, but where is the Succeſſe? have not Corruptions, Schiſmes, Errours, if not Hereſies, more growne under the ſhadow of Epiſcopacie, than under any other reformed Proteſtant Church in the world?

Let the Remonſtrance of the Miniſters ſpeake unto this, together with the numerous Complaints from all parts of the Kingdome. It is not to be denied, but as theſe weeds, ſo much precious Corne hath growne within the bounds of Epiſcopall Government, not that we muſt thank the ſmiles and indulgence of the Pontificiall party, but their frownes, brow-beatings, and manifold oppreſſions, or rather *God* himſelfe, who multiplyed the Iſraelites under *Pharaohs* Tyranny and Cruelty.

Sixthly, *Encouragement of Learning*, Give looſers leave to ſpeake, let the inferiour Clergy of the Kingdome (as they are uſually called) come in, and ſpeak what they uſually feele in their owne experience; Doth not the burthen and heat of the day, lye upon poore Parſons, Vicars, Lecturers, and Curates? What encouragement to Learning, whilſt a few Biſhops, Deanes, Arch Deacons, &c. ſwallow up the beſt and richeſt parts of Eccleſiaſtical maintenance, taking little or no paines, in feeding the ſoules of the people, ſtudying only Law-ſuits; how to riſe higher in the world, aud to ſow diſſention betwixt Kingdomes, Princes and their Subiects, when the inferiour Clergie in the meane time muſt ſit below the ſalt, gather up the crums from under the Epiſcopall Tables, and account it favour enough, to have a nod from a Biſhop; nay happily leſſe then that, an hollow-hearted leave or Licence to uſe a Pulpit in his Dioceſſe

Seventhly, A Conformitie of Epiſcopall Government unto Monarchy. Wee confeſſe the Conformity is too much

much and too neare. For Kings send out Writs in their owne names (as it is fit they should) so do Bishops. Kings rule and Command, so do Bishops: yet this Conformitie in Government unto Monarchie, cannot induce our charitie to thinke they (at least many of them) can cordially affect supreme Government whilst so many in latter times, have complyed so much with the Pope, in all Papall usages, the great enemie to all Kingly Government. How can we iudge, but if opportunitie, served, they would fall in with the Pope in matters of Supremacie, as in other his Traditions; Besides our Bishops in late dayes have cast the *odium* of all unacceptable Commands upon the King, a point of Bishop-craft wee confesse, but never used by faithfull Statesmen to their Princes, since the beginning of the world, till these our dayes. Whereas, wee (though the lowest of the Tribe of *Levi*) dare protest unto this Honourable Assembly, wee could bee contented to wipe off with our blood the least aspersion upon the honour of our most gracious Soveraigne, whom we sincerely value above all the Princes of the World.

But now most noble Senators, mistake not, we beseech you, the candor and ingenuitie of our intentions, wee doe, account it an inexpiable fault, to prescribe unto you, that must prescribe Lawes to us; onely we prostrate what wee have propounded in all humilitie at your feet, wherein we have both expressed our grievances and Petitions. Notwithstanding all abovesaid, wee are not so falne out with Episcopall Government, but if it seems good to his Majestie, and this high and honourable Court of Parliament to continue it, wee can (as formerly) sit downe under the shadow of it; if the Authoritie of it be sufficiently cleared by a well constituted Church-Assembly, whereunto wee should willingly subiect, as a way of the Church (anciently used) in such difficulties; only, in case it be thought meet upon advise by your singular wisdomes to continue Episcopall

Popall Government in the Church; bee pleased that the sting thereof be taken away: we meane the High commission burthensome and superfluous Offices, the unnecessary Ceremonies and subscriptions, according to their Canons, which they have onely used as snares and nets to catch the Innocent and faithfull in the Land; And the scandalous Ministers removed, the spots and blemishes of the Ecclesiasticall State. But in case such a Church Synod, or assembly, do find a Presbyteriall or Pastorall, and independent Iurisdiction to be more neerly agreeing unto the Word, and more fit for the present constitution of our Churches, May it please you then to encourage that way which comes next to the mind and will of God, and suits best with the present state of times,

So that finally, the summe of all we sue for, is that Iustice may bee done unto all sides, and Truth (with leave of his Maiestie, as supreme) may by the best Reason hew out its way in a Church Assembly or Synod, unto Peace and Unitie; not that we any way suspect your Candor or Integrety, with whom wee have trusted both our selves and all ours: But becausse the premised considerations do chiefly fall under Ecclesiasticall cognizance, it would be most satisfactory (under correction of more sublime iudgements) to the minds of all men, and no way derogatory to the honour of his Maiestie, or this high and honourable Court of Parliament. If such of the Ministery as have not violated their Consciences, nor stain'd their garments, but men of good temper, Piety, Learning, and consulting heads should be authoriz'd to advise in the matters of the Church, both Doctrine and Discipline.

Pardon we beseech you, our rudenesse, and brokennesse of our expressions, Truth is never so amiable, as when shee goes in her plainest garbe. Honour us so far, as not to take us for the giddy Sons of *Appollo*, who would set the whole world

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world on fire. Wee abhorre the intemperance of such spi-
rits. And doe humbly desire that all Pamphlets may be
staied from the Presse, which take upon them (afore their
time) to propound models & forms of Goverment till a wee
constituted Church Assembly have fully discussed the main
questions now in controversie. So shall you honour God
Almighty, bring out the Truth more fully, which is now
over clouded and obscured, performe the trust which his
Maiestie hath put in you; happily unite more fully these
Churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland.
Make our State admired in the eies of forraigne Churches,
pull down the proud and mighty from their seats, and exalt
the humble and meeke. And by such happy satisfaction in
all Ecclesiasticall wayes, you shall ingage the Church to
pray more fervently for the happinesse of our Illustri
ous King, and this flourishing Common-
wealth. Which God grant,
Amen.

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